



Bozeman, MT 59718

March 26, 2019

Standard R3Distribution List

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed decision notice is for maintaining the existing 3-pasture rest-rotation cooperative grazing system on the Robb-Ledford Wildlife Management Area (RLWMA) for a period of nine years (2020-2028). FWP would allow annual cattle grazing on the RLWMA from June 22 through October 15, following a rest-rotation grazing plan, in cooperation with the USFS, BLM, DNRC, and Ledford Creek Grazing Association. The Ledford Creek Grazing Association would be allowed to graze up to 2,955 animal unit months annually. The Ledford Creek Grazing Association would pay one-half of the FWP standard grazing rate and perform fence maintenance activities as outlined within Appendix A of the environmental assessment (EA).

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an EA was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for review on February 21, 2019. The EA was mailed to the standard FWP Region 3 distribution list and posted on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>. Public comments were received until 5:00pm on March 22, 2019. No public comment was received.

Based on the EA, public comments received, and benefits and risks associated with this project, it is my decision to go forward with Alternative C, the preferred alternative. I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis and that an environmental impact statement is not required.

Questions regarding this Decision Notice should be mailed to:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Robb-Ledford Wildlife Management Area Grazing Lease Renewal
Attn: Dean Waltee
PO Box 758
Sheridan, MT 59749
Or e-mailed to: dwaltee@mt.gov

Thank your interest.

Sincerely,

Mark Deleray
Region Three Supervisor



Region Three
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59718
March 26, 2019
Decision Notice for:

**Robb-Ledford Wildlife Management Area Grazing Lease Renewal Draft
Environmental Assessment Decision Notice**

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to renew an existing grazing lease on the Robb-Ledford Wildlife Management Area (RLWMA) during years 2020 through 2028. The proposal includes maintaining the existing 3-pasture rest-rotation cooperative grazing system with two adjustments

1. During every third year, when cattle start the annual grazing rotation in the Dry Hollow Pasture, change the prescription from: livestock graze the entire pasture during June 22–July 6; to livestock graze the lower elevation portion of the pasture during June 22–July 6 and graze the entire pasture during July 6–July 15. This would be accomplished by using an existing two-strand electric fence that approximately divides the pasture; and
2. Adjust the southwest corner of the Rock/Swamp Pasture and develop a water-gap to allow cattle to obtain water from the East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek. The pasture adjustment would add approximately five acres of smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*)-dominated rangeland to the Rock/Swamp Pasture.

The proposed adjustments are expected to further reduce previously identified grazing impacts to the Rock Creek Watershed through reduced pasture use and by distributing cattle to other parts of the pasture. The desire for a 9-year lease is to allow the grazing system to function for three complete grazing cycles. One cycle through a 3-pasture rest-rotation system requires three years. The longer lease period is also desired at this point because only minimal changes to the grazing system are being recommended and short lease periods do not allow sufficient time to detect changes in rangeland or riparian health trend. Longer lease terms are desired by the livestock producers because of financial planning.

The grazing lease would be maintained by the Ledford Creek Grazing Association. The Ledford Creek Grazing Association would continue to manage their adjacent public lands grazing leases in conjunction with the RLWMA as part of a landscape-scale cooperative grazing program. The Ledford Creek Grazing Association would be charged one-half the FWP standard grazing rate (currently \$24.50/animal unit month) and assume fence maintenance responsibilities outlined in Appendix A of the environmental assessment. The FWP standard grazing rate would be subject to annual change.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an environmental assessment was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on February 21, 2019. Public comments on the proposed project were taken through 5:00pm on March 22, 2019. The EA was mailed to the standard FWP Region 3 distribution list and posted on the FWP website.

Summary of Public Comment

FWP received no public comments.

Summary of Comments supporting the proposed project: None (0) received.

FWP received no public comments in support of the preferred alternative.

FWP Response:

Summary of Comments opposing the proposed project: None (0) received.

FWP received no public comments in opposition to the preferred alternative.

FWP Response:

Decision

Based on the environmental assessment, public comment, and FWP evaluation, it is my decision to proceed with the preferred alternative, Alternative C— *Renew the Existing Grazing Lease with two Adjustments*, as described in the Robb-Ledford Wildlife Management Area Grazing Lease Renewal Draft Environmental Assessment.



Mark Deleray
Regional Fish & Wildlife Supervisor
